

A

REVIEW

OF THE

STATE

OF THE

BRITISH NATION.

Saturday, December 11. 1708.

MY last Paper concluded with two *Scots* Paradoxes; and really, Gentlemen, this Cry of Persecution in *Scotland*, as 'tis manag'd in *England*, is a Complication of Paradoxes, a Heap of Inconsistencies, a Clue of Riddles and Ænigma's, which requires to be unravell'd. And to those that have but a common Eye-Sight, 'tis the unaccountablest Mystery in the World, to see this Nation so bewitch'd into a Belief of it. — There wants nothing to set these People to rights in this Affair, but a little History, Narration of Fact, and fair Stating Things; and when this is done, the willfully Dark may remain so indeed; but none, that will open their Eyes, and let in Demonstrations, can be any longer blind.

To this End I must return to my *Scots* Paradoxes, and I perswade my self, they will bear repeating.

1. There is a Place, where the Parish-Minister is Episcopal, *profess'd so*, and *ever was so*; only having taken the Oaths, he is continued by the Lenity of the Government in his Parish and Stipend, and preaches constantly to the People; yet in this Parish, and under his Nose, to use the *Draghead's Phrase* — Has a Dissenting Clergyman set up a Meeting-House, and calls himself an Episcopal Dissenter.
2. While the Church Establish'd in *Scotland* is Presbyterian, yet in a certain Parish in *Scotland*, the Minister, who enjoys

enjoys the Stipend, and preaches in the Church, is Episcopal—And the People being mostly Presbyterian, are at the Charge of a Presbyterian Minister to preach to them in a Meeting-House.

And will you have these Riddles expounded? Take them in brief thus;

The first will be best expounded by telling you a Story, which I presume, I need not want Vouchers for now, in the Town.

At a certain Quarter-Sessions of Justices, upon the new *Establishing of Justices of the Peace in Scotland* for a certain County, where a certain Nobleman, that has a Name and is not ashamed of it, is Heretable Sheriff of the County. An Episcopal Minister and some of his Hearers are conven'd before the Bench for opening the Meeting-House again, after it had been for some time shut up by the Order of the Government; one of them pleading for the rest, says, That 'tis true, they did open the Meeting House, and had Prayers and Preaching there, for that they were Episcopal in their Opinions, and could not satisfy themselves to joyn with the Presbyterians, and they hop'd the Justices would not make it a Crime, that they sought to satisfy their Consciences—And more to this Purpose—The *Prases*, as they call it there, as we the *Chairman*, makes Answer to this Purpose—I do not say these are exactly his Words, but am well satisfy'd, I have not varied the Substance—That he was sorry he was oblig'd to contradict them in so plain a Case; for, *Gentlemen*, says he, *I myself am Episcopal in my Judgment, as you say you are, and by the Lenity and Forbearance of the Government, I have maintain'd an Episcopal Minister in this Parish Church ever since the Revolution*, being the same Parish where the Meeting-House was set up; if therefore you are Episcopal, why do you not come to your Parish Church, your setting up a Meeting-House must be upon some other Account—And then came out the true Reason, truly that it was not Episcopacy, but Jacobitism; That it was true, the Parish Minister was Episcopal, but he had taken the Oaths to the Government, and pray'd for the Queen, and therefore the

People would not hear him, but set up a Meeting-House under his Nose, where they entertain'd a Minister that would do neither of these wicked Things—And I presume to add one Thing, which tho' it cannot be laid down as a Matter of Fact, but as a Supposition, yet I believe, I have as much Authority to advance it, as any Man can have for a Thing not in Being. I lay it down, I say, as my Opinion, and which I can give good Reasons for—*Viz.* That were the Episcopal Church in Scotland now uppermost, and establish'd by Law—There would be the same Number of Meeting-Houses as there are now, and they would be treated by the Church (Episcopal), just as they are now by the Kirk (Presbyterian), only with this Difference, that it would not make any Noise here, their Complaints would not be heard, nor by any Means would it be call'd Persecution.

And there's one of the *Scots* Paradoxes unfolded—And he that cannot see plainly into it, must be blinder than I am willing to suppose any of Mr. *Rebearsal's* Scholars can be, after so good an Instructor.

My next Paradox is—2. While the Church Establish'd in Scotland is Presbyterian, yet in a certain Parish in Scotland, the Minister, who enjoys the Stipend, and preaches in the Church, is Episcopal—And the People being mostly Presbyterian, are at the Charge of a Presbyterian Minister to preach to them in a Meeting-House.

This must pass for a Paradox with us all, or else this Flambeaux, call'd Persecution, is but an *Ignis fatuus*, that has lighted us all into a Ditch of Error and Mistake—Was ever such a thing as this heard of in a Nation of Persecution? Is it possible that the Presbyterian Church can be said to persecute the Episcopal, and at the same time submit so low for Peace Sake, as to let the Episcopal Minister enjoy the Benefice, and subject the Presbyterian Minister to keeping a Conventicle under him?

Now, lest our suspicious Friends should question the Truth of this, I cannot do less than lead them to the Enquiry—

And

And if they please but to enquire of Mr. Patrick Lyon Minister of Kinghorn, in the County of Fife—He is too honest not to own, that he himself is an Episcopal Minister, does not acknowledge the Presbyterian Church Government, never did, does not meet in their Presbyteries or Synods, or own their Judicatories—That yet he enjoys his *Benefice*, and *Mans*, or Dwelling-House, his *Glebe*, and his *Stipend*; solely possesses the Church, and preaches to the People—And that such of his Parishioners, who are Presbyterian, have call'd them another Minister, and gather'd themselves into a separate Congregation like Dissenters, pay their Minister by Contribution, and have their Assembly in a Meeting-House.

And why is this done? — Not I assure you, that the Law would not have dispossessed Mr. Lyon, not that the Church is too small for the Parish, not that the People of the Town were not generally Presbyterian, as appears by the Numbers at each Place, not that Mr. Lyon yielded to the Presbyterian Discipline at all; none of all these—But *merely* because the Church was tender, would not push Things to Extremities; Mr. Lyon was a peaceable Man, fell in with the Revolution, took the Oaths to the Government, prays for the QUEEN, &c. and the Church WOULD NOT PERSECUTE.

There's the other Paradox unfolded; and now Gentlemen, methinks both these put together should unfold the main Paradox, and tell us, what the Meaning of all this Matter is, and whence this Clamour of Persecution rises—And to help you a little in the Enquiry, I'll state the Case as briefly as possible, and as plainly as I can.

The Presbyterian Church is the Established Church in Scotland; I know ye are angry at it, Gentlemen, that it is so; but such is the Fate of Things, Tyranny run down-hill, and Liberty came up-hill—And all the rest was the meer Consequence of Things, for Religion will come at the Heels of Liberty, and there's no Help for it; if ye would not have had it so, you should not have tyranniz'd when you had the Power in your Hands—But of that by the by.

Now, the Presbyterian being uppermost, what ought the Episcopal Church to expect? I won't enter here into the ill-natur'd Enquiry of what they ought to expect by the great Law of Retaliation, *we'll let that alone to another Time*: But what ought they to have expected according to reasonable Prospect, and the Custom in like Cases? They could have no Reason to expect, but that the Presbyterians should dispossess all those that would not comply with the Establish'd Discipline, and then a Tolleration, or general Moderation or Forbearance had been the most they could have expected.

Now the Presbyterian has out-done all this; for as soon as the tumultuary Part of the Revolution was over, and the Church Established, they caused all Violence to cease, and turn'd out no Ministers for bring Episcopal, but chose rather to sit down by an imperfect Settlement, than to be thought severe, knowing the Episcopal Ministers would die off with Time, and would be succeeded according to the Legal Establishment: By this Moderation, near 200 Episcopal Ministers remain'd in their Churches, tho' still remaining Episcopal, besides such as conform'd to Presbyterian Church Government—All that are yet alive of these possess their Livings still, *except any judiciously depos'd for Scandal*, and are at this Day above 140 Ministers Episcopal in Judgment and Practice—And these the Church of England may call Brethren, *if they please*, there may be some Sense in it—How they can call the other so, remains to be examin'd.

But while these remain easy and undisturb'd, and have very little to complain of, there are another Sort of Ministers made up of those, who either were depos'd in the first Hurries of the Revolution by the Fury of the People, before the Church was at all legally settled, or lost their Benefices by that Act, which order'd, that all the Presbyterian Ministers, that were left alive of those who were turn'd out of their Livings in 1662, should take Possession of them, without farther Process, and the Number of these you may be sure was *very very few*; or such as were turn'd out afterward by Law for refusing to take the Oaths; and these are the People we are speaking of.

Whether